SIMPLE GOITER

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Goiter is a disease of the thyroid gland, usually accompanied by enlargement of the gland. This gland lies in the front of the neck. It secretes a substance containing iodine which influences growth and other body activities. This secretion is called *thyroxine*.

Different Kinds of Goiter . . .

THERE are several kinds of goiter. The size of a goiter is no indication of the amount of damage it may inflict upon the system. Some of the most dangerous goiters, especially those that tend to do serious damage to the heart, may be quite small as compared with large goiters which may be very disfiguring and yet not very harmful. Dangerous or so-called "toxic" goiters are extremely serious, and it is important that they be treated before permanent damage results. A doctor is the only person qualified to distinguish between the various types of goiter. For this reason it is important that a person with any enlargement of the thyroid gland consult a doctor promptly. The doctor will know what type of goiter is present and what treatment will be appropriate.

Simple Goiter and Its Cause . . .

SIMPLE goiter is less serious than other types of goiter. It is the most common and the most easily prevented and controlled. Simple goiter appears as a swelling in the neck just below the Adam's apple. The picture shows a 12-year-old girl who has a small goiter.

A person who has simple goiter is not getting enough iodine to supply the body's requirements. It appears that the thyroid gland enlarges in an attempt to make up for the lack of this substance. This iodine lack may be caused in several ways: (1) There may not be enough iodine in the diet. (2) The body may not be able to absorb the iodine

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present in the diet. (3) The body for some reason may need more of the iodine-containing secretion of the thyroid gland.

Great advance has been made in recent years in our knowledge of goiter. This disease is still being investigated. It is hoped that in the future we shall have a much more complete understanding of glandular substances and their effect on the chemistry of the body.

Lack of Iodine in the Diet . . .

MANY common foods contain iodine in small quantities, especially in regions near the seacoast. In these regions simple goiter is rare. In other districts the amount of iodine in the soil, water, and foodstuffs is low. Simple goiter is more common in these localities than elsewhere, and for this reason they are known as "goiter districts". Simple goiter affects children and grown-ups of both sexes, but is especially common in girls. In goiter districts enlargements of the thyroid gland have been found in boys as young as 6 years old and in girls 8 or 10 years old.

When the Needs of the Body for Thyroxine Are Increased . . .

SIMPLE goiter is most apt to appear at a time in life when there is an increased demand on the part of the body for thyroxine, the iodine-containing substance secreted by the thyroid gland. This increased demand occurs during puberty, pregnancy, the menopause, and during or following a chronic or acute infection.

Use of Iodine in the Treatment of Simple Goiter . . .

THOSE who have studied goiter agree that in simple goiter, without symptoms other than the slight enlargement of the gland in the neck, the feeding of very small amounts of iodine will often check the growth of the gland. However, when enlargement of the gland causes disfigurement or pressure, an operation may be necessary.

No one should take iodine for enlargement of the thyroid gland without the advice of a physician. If the enlargement is not due to simple goiter but to a more serious condition, iodine may make matters worse instead of better. In some cases it may cover up the seriousness of the condition for a time, until it is too late for the doctor to treat the goiter successfully even with surgery.

Use of Iodine in Preventing Simple Goiter . . .

In communities where simple goiter is common a small amount of an iodide taken once a week during the periods of life when the thyroid gland is most active will prevent goiter of this type in the majority of cases. Iodine for the prevention of simple goiter should not be taken in food preparations without the approval of a competent physician who will advise the patient as to the amounts to be used and the times for taking it. In the schools of some communities each child is given once a week a chocolate tablet containing iodine. The use of a medically approved iodized salt is a practical and economical way of supplying a family's iodine need in districts where iodine is lacking in the diet. For most people this is a safe and simple method of preventing simple goiter before it appears. If the doctor advises the employment of iodized salt as a goiter preventive, it should be used only in quantities that correspond to the usual salt consumption. No other special food preparation containing iodine should be used at the same time unless the doctor orders it, as overdosage with iodine may be dangerous to health.

Although iodized salt or any other medically approved preparation may act to prevent simple goiter before it appears, it is not a cure. The treatment of goiter is a medical problem, and a person who has goiter should put himself under the care of a competent physician.

AFTER GOITER HAS APPEARED, NO FORM OF IODINE SHOULD BE TAKEN WITHOUT A DOCTOR'S ADVICE

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